



Department of Conservation  
Bureau of Parks and Lands      Maine Forest Service  
Maine Geological Survey and Natural Areas Program  
Land Use Regulation Commission  
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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Machias River Conservation Project Completed**

Phase I of the Machias River Project was completed today, announced Maine Department of Conservation Commissioner Patrick K. MacGowan. "We are very pleased to bring this part of this important conservation project to a close," said MacGowan. "We have worked diligently with our partners at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, International Paper and the Land for Maine's Future Board to see that our goals of sustainable forestry, continued public access for traditional backcountry recreation and preservation of important wildlife habitat are realized."

Phase I of the project protects more than 210 miles of Machias River shoreline, from Third Machias Lake east to Whitneyville. Under the terms of the agreement, the conservation easement encompasses some 18,443 acres and covers 1,000 feet on each side of the Machias and six major tributaries. New construction and development activities will be prohibited within the easement area. Public access for traditional backcountry recreational activities, such as hunting, fishing, canoeing, camping and hiking, as currently provided by International Paper, is guaranteed forever. Sustainable timber management designed to enhance wildlife habitat, will be managed under the guidelines pioneered by International Paper. The State's Atlantic Salmon Commission will hold and monitor the easement. As the landowner, International Paper will continue to own and manage both the forestland and the lease lots under the conservation easement, which are unaffected by the deal.

"The Machias River project is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to protect an entire river corridor," said Kent Wommack, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy. "Ask any river guide to name Maine's best wilderness rivers and the Machias River will always come up."

The outright purchase in this first phase encompasses some 6,400 additional acres along Route 9 north to the outlet of Third Machias Lake. These resources will be owned and managed by the Department of Conservation. The acreage includes portions of First and Second Machias Lakes, approximately 4,800 acres along the Machias River corridor, and several primitive backcountry sites embedded within the easement area. These lands will be open to the public for a wide variety of recreational pursuits, including hunting, hiking, canoeing, snowmobiling and fishing.

"The Machias River system is one of the most important remaining spawning areas for wild Atlantic salmon," said Paul Nickerson, chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's endangered species program in the Northeast. "The long term protection of these habitats will greatly increase the likelihood of recovering Atlantic salmon populations in Maine."

"This is an important step in our efforts to restore the wild Atlantic Salmon to prior levels in the Machias River watershed," said Patrick Keliher, executive director of the Atlantic Salmon Commission. "Preserving nearly 25,000 acres of this valuable river system makes sense both environmentally and economically to Washington County."

Funding for the \$7.8 million project came from a variety of public and private sources, including a \$2 million Recovery Land Acquisition Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and \$400,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Atlantic Salmon Initiative. The Land for Maine's Future Board provided a \$2.8 million for the project – its largest grant since Maine voters approved \$50 million Land for Maine's Future program in 1998.

In addition, The Nature Conservancy provided \$2 million toward the initiative, which includes a \$1 million endowment to help the state steward the property. Phase II of the project, scheduled to begin in 2004, involves the outright purchase of the river corridor from Third Machias Lake to Fifth Machias Lake.